

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

35 USC 103

The Office rejected **claims 12-16** under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Miller (U.S. Pat. No. 4,080,424), Environmental Expert (www.environmental-expert.com) and Cabbage (U.S. Pat. No. 3,301,778). The applicant appreciates the detailed arguments/reasoning of the examiner in response to applicant's prior amendments. In further response, claim 12 was amended to even more clearly distinguish over Miller.

Amended claim 12 requires a step of "...*further reducing pressure in the physical solvent to remove carbon dioxide and to so form a carbon dioxide-depleted lean hydrogen sulfide-containing physical solvent...*" and a step of "...*feeding the substantially hydrogen sulfide-free stripping gas into a vacuum stripper to thereby strip hydrogen sulfide from the carbon dioxide-depleted lean hydrogen sulfide-containing physical solvent in the vacuum stripper to so form the ultra-lean physical solvent...*" Such method is neither taught nor suggested by Miller.

On the contrary, Miller uses a second distinct (chemical) solvent circuit to thereby reduce hydrogen sulfide from the flashed gases to produce a carbon dioxide loaded stripping gas, while the stripping gas in the presently claimed subject matter is carbon dioxide-depleted. The same considerations apply for dependent claims 15 and 16. Furthermore, while Environmental Expert and Cabbage were cited in the rejection, these references were not applied in the examiner's reasoning. However, these references should be moot in view of the amendments herein.

With respect to the rejection of claims 13-14 as being obvious over Miller in view of Mak (U.S. Pat. No. 7,192,468), the applicant again respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein. Regarding Miller, the same considerations as provided above apply as claims 13-14 are dependent on claim 12. Moreover, it is noted that Miller teaches that "...it is desirable to introduce the regenerated *physical solvent into the top of the physical solvent absorber at as low a temperature* as possible... (col. 4, lines 39-41)" and further teaches that "...the *gaseous output at the top of the physical solvent absorber...is...approximately 30 °F cooler than the gaseous input...*". Such teaching is squarely contrary to Mak's teaching of a decreasing top-to-bottom gradient where the lowest temperature is at the bottom of the column.

Therefore, the cited art teaches against their combination and the rejection should be deemed improper.

Allowable Subject Matter


Claims 1-11 were considered allowable by the examiner. The applicant agrees and claims 1-11 remain unchanged.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-16 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
Fish & Associates, PC

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By 
Martin Fessenmaier, Ph.D.
Reg. No. 46697

Fish & Associates, PC
2603 Main Street, Suite 1050
Irvine, CA 92614-6232
Telephone (949) 253-0944
Fax (949) 253-9069